

December 1, 2017

Staff and Local School Council
William Rainey Harper High School
6520 S Wood St Chicago, IL 60636

Re: Proposed Closure of William Rainey Harper High School

Dear Staff and Local School Council Members:

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is committed to providing every child from every community with a high quality education that prepares them for success in college and in life. CPS students continue to make record-breaking academic progress in every part of the city. Our vision is that all CPS schools can build on this progress by offering high quality, rigorous instruction from talented educators that help put Chicago students on a path to lasting success.

Enrollment at Harper in the fall of 2006 was at 1,301 students while enrollment in fall of 2017 was 133 students. Under-enrolled schools like Harper face challenges in providing a well-rounded education for their students because they often face challenges in offering robust program options for students. Ultimately, the cycle of declining enrollment creates challenges in programming and staff recruitment that make it difficult to provide the high school experience that students deserve.

As a result of these trends, the Englewood Community Action Council recently recommended that CPS create a state-of-the-art neighborhood high school in Englewood and consolidate the existing neighborhood high schools in Englewood. In June 2017, CPS followed through on the recommendation by formally proposing an investment to create a state-of-the-art neighborhood high school, now worth \$85 million. The new school is scheduled to open in fall 2019 with a freshman class. Over multiple meetings between the Steering Committee and CPS leadership as well as tours of the existing Englewood high schools, a variety of options were considered for the current Englewood high schools, including closure and multi-year phase outs. Ultimately, a vote was taken on two options and the majority vote of the Steering Committee was to close the high schools, including Harper, at the end of 2017-18 school year and provide robust, individualized support to transition current students to other higher performing high schools that are a good match for their needs.

Consequently, today CPS is announcing a proposal to the Board of Education to close Hope, Harper, Robeson and TEAM Englewood high schools at the end of this school year (2017-18) and reassign current high school students to other, higher performing high schools for the remainder of their high school careers.

The proposed closure meets the criteria of the Chief Executive Officer's Guidelines for School Actions (Guidelines) because it is a proposal requested by community members via the process to request proposals outlined in the Guidelines. Specifically, we have heard the request for this proposal from the Englewood Community Action Council and at a meeting of the Englewood Community Leadership Steering Committee in calendar year 2017. In addition, current students at Harper will be provided options to enroll in higher performing schools, as defined by the Guidelines.

Over the coming months, CPS will work with current students and families at these high schools to create individualized transition plans that support student safety, learning and social emotional well-being. CPS will also work with your labor union over the coming weeks to identify supports that the



Board may provide for you and your colleagues in the four high schools to ease this transition as much as possible and to provide you any benefits to which you are entitled under your collective bargaining agreement. In the meantime, if you have any questions about what this proposal means for you, please contact the Talent Office at workforceplanning@cps.edu.

If you would like more detail about the proposed closure, please refer to the Draft Transition Plan that is included with this letter.

As a next step, CPS will hold two community meetings and one public hearing to hear further feedback on CPS' proposal (meeting information is below). Following the meetings and hearing, the Board of Education may vote on this proposal as early as February of 2018.

Public Comment on this Proposal

I invite you to share your feedback on this proposal during the following two community meetings and one public hearing noted below:

Community Meeting 1

January 10, 2018
6 to 8 p.m.
Kennedy King College
(Great Hall, U Building)
740 W 63 St

Community Meeting 2

January 17, 2018
6 to 8 p.m.
Hamilton Park Fieldhouse
513 W 72nd St

Public Hearing

January 30, 2018
5:30 to 8 p.m.
CPS Central Office
42 West Madison Street

If you wish to comment at the community meetings or hearing, you must sign up to speak on the day of, at the designated location, beginning one hour before the designated start time and ending one 30 minutes after the start of the meeting or hearing. You will have two minutes to speak, unless the hearing officer or meeting organizer provides an extension. The hearing will conclude at the stated end time or following the comments of the last person who has signed up to speak, whichever occurs first.

Thank you in advance for your feedback as we work to provide all Chicago Public School students with the high quality education they deserve. After the community meetings and public hearing, I will review a written report from the hearing officer and at that time, I may recommend that the Board consider and approve the closure of Harper.

Further Questions and Concerns:

All of this information can be found at CPS.edu/Transitions. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this proposal and the Draft Transition Plan, please call Chicago Public Schools at (773) 553-1500 or email Transitions@cps.edu.

Sincerely,

Forrest Claypool
Chief Executive Officer
Chicago Public Schools